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ABSTRACT

A rationale for teaching foreign languages in Venezuelan schools is discussed. An included sociolinguistic profile of Venezuela indicates that Spanish is the sole language of internal communication needs. Other languages spoken in Venezuela serve primarily a group function among the immigrant and indigenous communities. However, the teaching of additional languages could serve general cultural, scientific, technological, international trade, and tourism needs. Spanish meets the local needs for scientific and technological investigation and as such is a local language of science. However, English, as the international language of science, needs to be included in the Venezuelan school curriculum. English is a foreign language in Venezuela and not a second language since it fulfills no societal function. As such, motivation to learn English is typically low. In the schools, too little emphasis is placed on scientific reading and the quantity of reading material is insufficient. It is suggested that Venezuela, as a nation seeking to improve itself through science and technology, place great emphasis on reading comprehension of English for Science and Technology (EST) at the senior high school level. English, instead of being an isolated subject, should be functionally integrated into the overall curriculum. (Author/JK)

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Language Planning for Venezuela: The Role of English*

Irving Kelsey and Jose Serrano

An Approach to Language Planning

Let us assume for a moment that no foreign languages are taught in Venezuelan schools, and that we are asked by the Educational Authorities, to provide a rationale for teaching foreign languages. To begin with, we must ask ourselves a number of questions that provide a frame of reference for this language planning process. Some of these would include the following:

What are the communicative needs of the nation?

What priorities should be established to meet these needs?

Does the official language meet the communicative requirements of the nation?

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In what ways would other languages meet national goals-culturally, economically, and scientifically?

If other languages are required, which should be selected, and what criteria should be employed in the selection process?

For what purpose should additional languages be taught, at what educational level, and how intensive should the instruction be?

Finally, what teaching methodology should be employed?

This paper does not propose to answer all of these questions. To do so, would require an interdisciplinary emphasis far beyond the scope of this study. However, if a language planning study is to provide a viable basis for a decision by the Educational Authorities, it would have to take into account the issues raised by these questions. Corder (1973:59) provides valuable insights into this process of language planning:

Decisions about what languages and dialects to use for what purpose in the community is a political matter for governments to decide. These decisions may be based on no more than political or racial prejudice, or they may be based on a careful survey of the various functions which the different languages and dialects actually fulfil in the community.

Two Sociolinguistic Profiles of Venezuela

In 1980, we prepared a sociolinguistic profile of Venezuela. This profile revealed the following statistics: approximately 15,510,000 or 94% of the Venezuelan population are native Spanish speakers; 742,500 or 4.5% are immigrants who can speak languages other than Spanish; and about 247,500 or 1.5% speak local indigenous languages. These figures categorically show that Venezuela is a monolingual country with no apparent internal communication problem, excluding that of isolated indigenous groups. In fact, since the colonial period, Spanish has been the only official language of the country. Table 1 presents this sociolinguistic profile, while Appendix A gives an explanation of the statistical data and the symbols used in the profile.

TABLE 1
Sociolinguistic Profile of Venezuela (1980)

% of Usage	Language	Types; Functions	Number of Speakers	Total %
Class I (Official Language)				
94%	Spanish	Soyi	15,510,000	94%
Class VI (Foreign Languages of Immigrants)				
1.47%	Italian	Sg		
.88%	Portugese	Sg		
.61%	English	Sgsxli		
.24%	Arabic	Sg		
.15%	German	Sg		
.09%	French	Sgsy		
.05%	Chinese	Sg		
.05%	Dutch	Sg		
.04%	Hungarian	Sg		
.03%	Yugoslavian	Sg		
.03%	Polish	Sg		
.86%	Other foreign languages			
			742,500	4.5%
Class VI (Indian Languages)				
.48%	Guajiro	Vg		
.10%	Yanomami	Vg		
.09%	Guarao	Vg		
.07%	Pemón	Vg		
.03%	Guajibo	Vg		
.03%	Maquiritare	Vg		
.70%	Other indian languages			
			247,500	1.5%
			<u>16,500,000</u>	<u>100%</u>
(Other Languages with Special Functions)				
	Latin	Csz		
	Hebrew	Sr		

The above percentages provide a partial answer to the existing linguistic needs of the nation. The survey shows that Spanish satisfies internal communication needs, and that additional languages are not required for this purpose. The other languages spoken in the country perform chiefly a group function among the immigrant and indigenous communities. But there may be other reasons for teaching additional languages. Some of these reasons include: general culture, scientific and technological development, international trade, and tourism. It is in these areas that the teaching of foreign languages can play an important role for the country.

The data from the first profile was also used to make a second sociolinguistic profile of Venezuela following the algebraic formula proposed by Ferguson (1966). Into this formula, (and also in the previous profile), we introduced the notion 'language of science'. Data supporting the following three categories of language of science will be presented in this paper:

- 1) international language of science
- 2) local language of science
- 3) not a language of science

'x' will represent the first category, 'y' the second, and 'z' the third. These three categories of language of science will be included only when the languages within the profile fulfill an official or school function. The resulting formula for Venezuela is shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Sociolinguistic Profile of Venezuela

$$6^+ = 1(\text{Soyi}) + 3^+(2\text{Sg}, \text{Sgisx}, \{\text{Sg}\}, \{\text{Vg}\}) + 2(\text{Csz}, \text{Sgsy})$$

This formula now reveals that Spanish, the major and official language, is a local language of science; that English, a minor language with an international function, is a school subject and an international language of science; that Latin, a language of special status, is a school subject and is not a language of science; and that French, a language of special status, is a school subject and a local language of science.

In the language survey, Spanish is marked with an international function. Stewart (1968:540) defines 'international' as "the function of a linguistic system ... as a major medium of communication which is international in scope, e.g., for diplomatic relations, foreign trade, tourism, etc." However, this use of international function for Spanish is misleading, particularly in the field of science, as will become obvious in the development of this paper.

National Goals and Language Planning

The National Plans for Venezuela call for scientific and technological advancement as a crucial aspect in the developmental process of the nation. Spanish meets the local needs for scientific and technological investigation. In this sense, Spanish fulfills the function of a local language of science. But is this sufficient to achieve the desired scientific and

technological advancement? Note that Venezuela's national goals include the following primary objectives, as reported by CONICIT, National Council for Scientific and Technological Investigation (1977:41-42):

To strengthen and extend the national capacity for generating scientific and technological knowledge applicable to the production of goods and services.

To achieve access to those technologies available in the world market that are necessary for national development, and to increase the competitive capacity of national companies.

To develop research activities in educational institutes, including research as a fundamental part of the integral formation of the individual.¹

We now quote from Roche's (1978:134) analysis of world production of scientific literature, (based on the Science Citation Index):

The countries that form the Organization for Cooperation and Scientific Development and the countries of Eastern Europe produce 93.99% of the principal scientific literature. The rest of the

¹This, and other Spanish sources to follow, have been translated by the authors.

world produces 6.01% The contribution of Latin America is the lowest: only 0.96% of the total, comprising 2,618 publications Among those Third World countries most productive - relatively speaking - are, first India with 6,880 publications, followed by Argentina (764), Egypt (683), Brazil (573), Mexico (368), Chile (356), Nigeria (280), and Venezuela (200). It is clear however, that Chile and Venezuela would have, per capita, a greater rate of publications than Brazil.

Roche demonstrates that Latin America produces less than one percent of world scientific literature. Comparing this fact with Venezuela's goals to expand its scientific and technological knowledge, to have access to international technology, and to develop scientific investigation, it is logical that learning languages of industrialized nations will play a key role in meeting these goals. It is a part of language planning to determine the relative frequency of these other languages in the international fields of science and technology.

Scientific Development and the International Language of Science

Venezuelan University students and professionals encounter the reality of using foreign languages in their academic requirements and scientific endeavors. This can be better understood by examining bibliographical data concerning international

scientific publications. For example, the Language Department at Simon Bolivar University, made a bibliographical survey of the reading material required for students in science and technology. It was found that approximately 95% of these texts and publications were written in English.² This is not surprising. In consulting the 1978 Science Citation Index, an International Interdisciplinary Index to the Literature of Science, Medecine, Agriculture, Technology, and the Behavioral Sciences, we found the following data regarding journals of science most highly cited in 1974:

- 1) From a total of 206 scientific journals, 184, including the first 32 most highly cited, originate in English speaking countries.
- 2) Other journals originating in non-English speaking countries, Germany, Russia, France, Japan, Italy, Switzerland, and Czeckoslovakia, are largely published in English, or include English abstracts of articles.

This confirms that English is the international language of science, and that the languages of these other nations are local languages of science. Over 90% of these publications are written in English for the international scientific community. (See Appendix B.) This fact alone, the function of

² As reported by Elinor Medina de Callarotti, Head of the Language Department, Simon Bolivar University, at the First Linguistic Congress of Venezuela, Maracaibo, June, 1980.

English in the scientific world community, provides the criterion for choosing English as an additional language to teach in Venezuela. The national strategy, reported by CONICIT, reads as follows:

To create the foundation and instruments for the development of scientific and technological research. (1977:42)

In our opinion, English is an instrument that permits access to international research and development. This is a major reason for teaching English in Venezuela.

English Teaching in Venezuelan Secondary Schools

The use of sociolinguistic profiles is not limited to providing a basis for selecting which languages are to be taught. They are also relevant to the determination of curriculum objectives, i.e., the communicative skills to be taught. To illustrate this point, we will examine English teaching in Venezuelan Secondary Schools.

English is a foreign language in Venezuela, not a second language, because it fulfills no societal function. It is not employed for governmental or other cultural activities. The language profile reveals that less than one percent of the total Venezuelan population are native English speakers, or approximately 100,000 inhabitants. There is practically no opportunity for the Venezuelan student to use oral English outside the classroom. Spoken English is largely used as a group function among native English speakers. Paradoxically,

an examination of the secondary school English program, reveals that the main emphasis is on oral production, and that written work and reading receive less attention, as shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3
The Distribution of Classroom Hours in the
Venezuelan High School English Program

Year	Oral work	Written work and reading	Other activities	Total
First %	60 50%	22 18%	38 32%	120 100%
Second %	48 53%	15 17%	27 30%	90 100%
Third %	49 54%	14 16%	27 30%	90 100%
Fourth %	37 41%	30* 33%	23 26%	90 100%
Fifth %	37 41%	30* 33%	23 26%	90 100%

*20 of these 30 hours are dedicated to reading.

It is generally observed that the majority of secondary school students in Venezuela study English without any primary motivation, " ... in which the interest comes from the learner himself." (Huerta 1979:13) English is just a school subject to memorize for the sole purpose of passing examinations during five dreary and obligatory years. Other nations in which English is a foreign language, have the same problem. Unfortunately, when there is no immediate need to use a language, there is a general lack of motivation to

learn it. (See Mackay and Mountford (1978:2) for a discussion of deferred purpose, " ... deferred till the tertiary level of education ..." as a possible factor inhibiting the secondary student's motivation.)

We have seen that English plays a major instrumental role in providing information in the fields of science and technology. This role should be recognized at the secondary, and not just in the tertiary level of education. An examination of the English program in secondary education for the senior high school level, reveals the following regarding the reading of scientific English, presented in Tables 4 and 5:

TABLE 4

Total Number of Reading Hours in the Venezuelan Senior High School, and Percentages of General and Scientific Reading

Year	General Reading	Scientific Reading	Total
Fourth	12	8	20
%	60%	40%	100%
Fifth	12	8	20
%	60%	40%	100%

TABLE 5

Percentage of Reading in the Venezuelan Senior High School Based on the Total Number of Class Hours

Year	General Reading	Scientific Reading	Total Reading	Total Number Class Hours
Fourth	12	8	20	90
%	13%	.09%	22%	100%
Fifth	12	8	20	90
%	13%	.09%	22%	100%

We conclude that not only is the quantity of reading material insufficient, but also that too little emphasis is placed on scientific reading. This quantity deficiency in reading has certainly been noted by Venezuelan English professors. For example, Milano (1978:9) has pointed out that English is a foreign language in Venezuela, and as a result, has proposed a methodology which emphasizes reading comprehension:

I have suggested that the secondary school teacher emphasize reading comprehension more than oral production because once the student leaves the language classroom, he returns to his daily language environment - speaking Spanish - inside as well as outside the school As we can observe, this teaching situation is completely artificial, and its results are almost predestined to be unproductive.

Unfortunately, no interest has been shown in Milano's proposal. Teaching the 'four skill approach' - listening, speaking, reading and writing - has proven a failure. After five years of English, the graduating Venezuelan high school student can neither understand nor speak oral English in a normal communicative context. Consequently, we propose emphasizing a reading comprehension of English for science and technology in senior high school, and the integration of English within the total learning experience. The secondary

school student should be required to use English as a necessary information source for his academic advancement and for his future professional life. Currently, the student learns English as an isolated subject. He need only know the normative grammatical and lexical rules of usage (often in the form of bizarre formulas) to pass an examination. There is no requirement to understand the use of English within a general academic or communicative context. As Widdowson has pointed out, concerning the teaching of EST:

Its first objective is to change the student's concept of English from that which represents it as a separate set of facts about words and sentence patterns and grammatical rules to that which represents it as a means of communication similar in nature to his own language. (1979:44)

Conclusion

We have proposed the notion, 'language of science', and divided it into three categories: international language of science, local language of science, and not a language of science. Data has been presented to argue that English is the international language of science. The notion, 'international language of science', is clearly separate from Stewart's international function. A limitation of the existing profile formulas is that they fail to include the concept, 'language of science', which is an important factor for the language planning process. We have shown that the notion,

'language of science', is crucial to a meaningful sociolinguistic profile of Venezuela, as it will also be to other nations seeking to improve their societies through science and technology. We have also argued that an emphasis in a reading comprehension of EST is valid at the Venezuelan senior high school level. Instead of being an isolated subject, English should be functionally integrated into the overall curriculum.

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APPENDIX A

I Explanation of statistical data found in Table 1.

Total Population:

The total of the Venezuelan population is a projection based on the binomial expansion method, using a formula that takes into account previous national census statistics. This total also includes illegal aliens, by suggestion of Mr. Nelson Ricci B., Director of Information, Office of Statistics, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Ministry of the Interior.

Foreign Languages of Immigrants:

The total for each group of immigrants includes both resident aliens and those who have become naturalized Venezuelan citizens. The statistical data for the immigrant population includes the years 1900-1979. This information was supplied by Mr. Nelson Ricci B., Director of Information.

Indian Languages:

The number of tribes with five thousand or more members and the total number of the indigenous population, are figures supplied by an authority on Venezuelan indigenous groups, professor Mosonyi of Central University, Caracas, in an interview, May, 1980. These are approximate numbers, to be confirmed when the national census of 1981 is published. Statistical investigations undertaken up to the present time, have not included the indigenous population in its entirety. It is difficult to calculate the number of Guajiros in Venezuela, considering that the Guajiros live in Venezuela and

APPENDIX A

Colombia. There are Guajiros who live in constant movement between the two countries.

II Explanation of symbolic notation found in Table 1.

Percentage of usage:		Language functions:	
Class I	75% +	o	official
Class VI	Below 5%	g	group
Language types:		s	school subject
S	Standard	l	literary
V	Vernacular	r	religious
C	Classical	i	international

Note: For a definition of these terms, see Stewart 1968.

Language functions added by the authors of this paper:

- x international language of science
- y local language of science
- z not a language of science

Note: These functions for language of science are included only when the languages within the profile fulfill an official or school function.

APPENDIX B

The 206 Most Highly Cited Scientific Journals in 1974

Source	Number of Journals	Languages Used	Examples
English-speaking countries	184	English	1) Journal American Chemical Society 2) Nature
East and West Germany	10	German English Russian	1) Physica Status Solidi (a) 2) European Journal of Physiology
Russia	6	Russian English (3 entirely in Eng.)	Doklady Akademii Nauk SSSR
France	2	French English abstracts	Comptes Rendus Des Séances de l'Académie Des Sciences
Czechoslovakia	1	English	Collection of Czechoslovak Chemical Communications
Italy	1	English (title in Italian)	Il Nuovo Cimento della Società Italiana di Fisica
Japan	1	English	Bulletin of the Chemical Society of Japan
Switzerland	1	French German English	Helvetica Chimica Acta